

Big regional transport plan to be mulled

BREA — Southland officials will consider a sweeping, \$26.1 billion regional transportation plan intended to speed up road and rail improvements and help the sagging economy, it was announced Friday.

Mark Pisano of the Southern California Association of Governments unveiled the plan at the group's annual retreat, saying it would create thousands of high-paying jobs while also improving the region's infrastructure.

"If Southern California's ports are the heart of its economy, then our freeways and railways are the arteries that must remain flowing in order to deliver the goods and jobs that nourish our economy," Pisano said.

The wide-ranging preliminary plan, dubbed "Operation Jumpstart," calls for several significant projects, including:

- The creation of dedicated truck tollways on the Pomona (60), Long Beach (710) and Barstow (15) freeways;

- Expanding the region's east-west railway corridor and adding signals, rail yards and grade separations to decrease delays at rail crossings;

- Development of a regional airport system connected by a high-speed Maglev rail system.

The plan, which will be considered in detail at SCAG's annual economic forecast this fall, was developed in response to reports detailing declining income and stagnant employment in Southern California, Pisano said.

"Southern California's position as a national and international commerce center is totally reliant on our ability to develop the road, rail, and air infrastructure," Pisano said. "We need to keep that commerce flowing and growing."

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